

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY</b>
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## PURPOSE

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Bureau's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

## POLICY

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the Bureau and its employees in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory employees. The Bureau also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some Bureau employees. The personal use of social media can have bearing on Bureau employees in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Bureau employees.

## DEFINITIONS

*Blog:* A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

*Page:* The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

*Post:* Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on site.

*Profile:* Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

*Social Media:* A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube, Vine), and wikis (Wikipedia), blogs and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

*Social Networks:* Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

*Speech:* Expression of communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

*Web 2.0:* The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

*Wiki:* Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

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**ON-THE-JOB-USE**

**A. Department –Sanctioned Presence**

**1. Procedures**

- a. All Bureau social media sites or page(s) shall be approved by the Director or designee and shall be administered by the Information Technology Division or as otherwise determined.
- b. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Bureau and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
  - (1) Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
  - (2) Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- d. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Bureau.
  - (1) Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Bureau reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
  - (2) Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

**2. Department-Sanctioned Use**

- a. Bureau employees representing the Bureau via social media outlets shall do the following:

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- (1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Bureau standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  - (2) Identify themselves as a member of the Bureau.
  - (3) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to Bureau training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
  - (4) Not conduct political activities or private business.
- b. Bureau employees, who use Bureau computers to access social media will adhere to guidelines set forth by the *North Carolina Best Practices for Social Media Usage* manual.  
<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/documents/best-practices-local-government-social-media-usage-north-carolina>
  - c. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Potential Use

1. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence, intelligence or information about:
  - a. missing persons;
  - b. wanted persons;
  - c. gang participation;
  - d. crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking);
  - e. photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer;
  - f. terrorism; and
  - g. general criminal activity.
2. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
  - a. providing crime prevention tips;
  - b. offering online-reporting opportunities;
  - c. sharing crime maps and data; and

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- d. soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crimestoppers, text-a-tip).
- 3. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
  - a. road closures,
  - b. special events,
  - c. weather emergencies, and
  - d. missing or endangered persons.
- 4. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.
- 5. The Bureau will include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
  - a. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.
  - b. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content shall be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
  - c. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
  - d. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
  - e. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

## PERSONAL USE

### A. Precautions and Prohibitions

Bureau employees are cautioned that speech on or off duty made pursuant to their official duties may not be protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Bureau. Bureau employees shall abide by the following guidelines when using social media outlets:

- 1. When using social media, Bureau employees shall be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the *Bureau Values and Principles* is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, Bureau employees are prohibited from:

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- a. Speech containing obscene and sexually explicit language, images of acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
  - b. Speech involving themselves or other Bureau employees reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or a violation of Bureau values and principles.
2. Bureau employees have a right to have personal web pages or sites, however, references to or about the Bureau that may compromise the agency's integrity are prohibited. This includes posting, transmitting and/or disseminating any photographs, video or audio recordings, likenesses or images of Bureau logos, emblems, uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles, equipment or other material that specifically identifies the Bureau on any personal or social networking website or web page without the express written permission of the Director or designee.
3. No employee shall represent themselves, directly or indirectly, in any public forum as a member of the Bureau, either by text, photograph or image depicting the uniform, badge, or patch in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character.
4. No employee will represent their opinions or comments as that of the Bureau or as an official of the Bureau. This includes, but is not limited to, any posting that would discriminate or imply discrimination against any person or group based on age, ancestry, belief, race, creed, disability, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or veteran status.
5. No employee shall post images or text that identifies other personnel as employees of the Bureau without permission from that employee.
6. When utilizing the internet, social networking sites or other medium of communication, employees shall adhere to Bureau policies governing confidentiality of information and intelligence, as well as those policies governing contacts with journalistic media and the public. No information, including but not limited to case details and intelligence information, shall be divulged that would not otherwise be made public. Any employee who becomes aware of or has knowledge of a posting and/or social networking site in violation of this policy shall immediately notify their SAC/Supervisor.
7. While working, an employee may utilize personal social networking in order to communicate briefly with family or other individuals as they might communicate

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by telephone, email or text. These communications must be brief, necessary to daily functions and not purely social. Most importantly, they must not interfere with the employee's work.

8. Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet postings, such as future employment, cross examinations in court and public, as well as private embarrassment. In addition, Bureau agents should be aware that their activities on social networking sites may impact their options for future specialized assignments, such as street level drugs, covert operations and executive security due to officer safety concerns. Bureau agents who identify themselves as law enforcement officers may be barred from certain covert assignments due to officer safety concerns.
9. Any employee who violates the conditions of this policy will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.